

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of controlling software usage, comprising the steps of:

- (a) associating at least one predetermined rule with a software package;
- (b) receiving an indication of an attempt by a user to access the software package; and
- (c) comparing the indication to at least one predetermined rule,

wherein at least step (c) is performed by a trusted third party.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein step (b) comprises monitoring access via at least one of electronic wrapping and an agent.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising selecting, in view of step (c), at least one of (i) authorizing the use of the software package, (ii) denying use of the software package, (iii) offering an alternative usage plan for the software package and (iv) acknowledging compliance with the at least one predetermined rule.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the user and the trusted third party are in communication with each other via an electronic network.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the software vendor, user and trusted third party are in communication with one another via an electronic network.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one predetermined rule corresponds to a term of a license for the software package.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the software vendor and user negotiate terms of a software package license and the terms are incorporated into the wrapper.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising collecting software package usage data.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising reporting to at least one of the software vendor and the user the software package usage data.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising generating a software package usage statement.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one predetermined rule comprises a valuation of the software package.

12. The method of claim 1, further comprising employing software package usage data to monitor software license compliance.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the software package operates on at least one of a computer and a mobile communications device.

14. A method of providing confidence in software license compliance by involving a trusted third party in a software vendor/user transaction, the method comprising the steps of:

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(a) identifying a vendor-generated software package to which user access should be restricted unless a software license is available;

(b) associating at least a portion of terms of the software license with the software package;

(c) monitoring for attempts to access the software package;

(d) determining for each attempt to access the software package whether access should be granted or denied based on the at least a portion of the license terms; and

(e) collecting and storing data related to the granted and denied access,

wherein at least steps (c)-(e) are performed by a third party that is trusted by both the software vendor and software user and is different from both the software vendor and software user.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the third party is at least one of a bank, an accounting firm and a university.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein the user and the third party are in communication with each other via an electronic network.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the electronic network comprises the Internet.

18. The method of claim 14, wherein the software vendor, user and third party are in communication with one another via an electronic network.

19. The method of claim 14, wherein the software vendor and user negotiate terms of the software license that are incorporated into the wrapper.

20. The method of claim 14, further comprising aggregating data from a plurality of users.

21. The method of claim 14, further comprising reporting the data to at least one of the software vendor and the user.

22. The method of claim 14, further comprising generating a software package usage statement.

23. A method of coordinating the authorized use of a software package, comprising the steps of:

(a) establishing a trusted third party vis-à-vis a software package vendor and a software package user;

(b) detecting when the software package user accesses the software package;

(c) determining whether the software package user has a valid software license to be authorized to use the software package; and

(d) permitting use of the software package by the user if it is determined by the trusted third party that the user has a valid software license.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the trusted third party comprises at least one of a bank, an accounting firm and a university.

25. The method of claim 23, wherein the detecting step (b) comprises employing at least one of (i) an electronic wrapper that is associated with the software package and (ii) a monitoring agent.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein at least the software package user and the trusted third party are in communication with each other via an electronic network.

27. The method of claim 23, wherein the software package vendor and software package user negotiate terms of the software license without the involvement of the trusted third party.

28. The method of claim 23, further comprising offering an alternative software package usage plan to the user in the event the user does not have a valid software license.

29. The method of claim 23, further comprising collecting and storing data related to software package usage.

30. The method of claim 29, further comprising confirming compliance with a software license agreement.

31. The method of claim 29, further comprising offering a statement of usage to at least the software package user.

32. The method of claim 29, further comprising arranging for payment for usage of the software package via the trusted third party.

33. A method for managing software licenses, comprising the steps of:

(a) receiving software usage data that is representative of use of a software package;

(b) comparing the software usage data to at least one predetermined software usage rule that is representative of a software license term or condition for the software package;

(c) determining whether the software usage data is in compliance with the software license term or condition by comparing the software usage data with the at least one predetermined software usage rule; and

(d) at least one of (i) acknowledging compliance of the software usage with the software license term or condition, (ii) authorizing usage of the software package, (iii) denying usage of the software package, (iv) charging a fee for usage of the software package and (v) aggregating the software usage data,

wherein at least step (b) is performed by a trusted third party.